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# YOUTH

BY

J. H. WALLIS



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# YOUTH

*By*

*J. H. WALLIS*



*Boston*

*RICHARD G. BADGER*

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## DEDICATION

To My Mother

To you I owe much of my being  
And most of my heart  
That throbs with the feelings my fancy  
Has clothed in this costume of art.  
There are those that are common to many  
And potent to injure or bless;  
And these let all know of, but others  
We dare not express.

The years that are age's creators  
And death's harbingers  
Are strong with an equal dominion  
In your heart and my heart and my verse.  
But those who are numb unto sorrow  
Are weaker and poorer by far,  
And so we would not have us other  
Than such as we are.





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YOUTH



## YOUTH

I exult in what age cannot grieve,  
I am filled with what time cannot tire:  
Unboundable power to achieve,  
Unreachable goals to inspire.  
In my boundless control over things,  
In my limitless reach of desire  
I am equal with conquerors and kings —  
I am youth, I am life, I am fire!

I awake to the scope of my being —  
All is sudden and endless and new;  
My work is too vast for the seeing,  
But I know what my effort can do.  
Where are armies that I cannot lead them?  
Where are foes that would dare me to strife? —  
The sword and the cannon shall feed them.  
I am fire, I am youth, I am life!

Obeisance? — my power will command it  
To the mandate I bear in my strife.  
With the sizzling of fire I will brand it,  
I will seal it with letters of life.  
And its end will be like its beginning:  
“Bow down to the progress of truth.”  
And the world is too small for the winning —  
I am life, I am fire, I am youth!

## YOUTH AND FAME

World, wrinkled world, while I am young grant  
fame.

While I can taste the fruit of my desire  
Light on each hill a leaping signal fire;  
Yea, let thy vassal hills in fire proclaim  
Across the lands the blazing of my name.

Grant laurel crowns and jewelled and golden  
wire

That I may fling them at Her feet entire  
While on her cheeks the blood burns like a  
flame.

When life's low fire glows a dull ashy red,  
And earth I count of little worth or wit,  
Fame may be mine when fame's desire is fled,  
When I am old and do not care for it;  
And she who was to wear my crowns and sit  
A queen — who knows? — perhaps she may  
be dead.

## THE YEARNING OF YOUTH

Before I am tied to a city,  
Or smile by the side of a wife,  
I must look on earth's riches and secrets  
To feed my keen craving of life.  
I must sail to the ends of the ocean,  
And gaze on the faces of kings,  
In the land of the morning and evening  
I must look on strange things.

Across the hot sands of Sahara  
In the train of the slow caravan  
I shall follow the craving that leads me,  
That stirs in the youth of a man.  
The anger of heat and of sunlight,  
The jargon of alien speech  
For my eyes and my ears will be feeding  
Of the hunger of each.

From the realm where the heat is eternal  
To the kingdoms of mountains of cold,  
With Danger and Death for my comrades  
I shall seek some red battle of old.  
Beyond the last flag of our nations,  
Beyond the dominion of steam,  
Where the Great King was conquered or captured  
Is the land of my dream.

I would tread where has trod Alexander,  
In the secreted heart of the East,  
I would taste all its sweets and its sorrows,  
In its rites I would be as a priest.  
I would learn of its wonders and riches  
Of fabrics and diamonds and pearls,  
I would gaze on its age-hidden secrets  
And the graces of girls.

The red grapes of joy and of pleasure,  
The blood, red and streaming, of strife,  
The poison of anguish and sorrow,  
Will fill the rich cup of my life.  
All sounds and all tastes and all colors  
And motions, are part of my goal,  
And feelings and passions and dreamings  
Are food for my soul.

And all this will be like the music  
That adds to the spirit that hears,  
Or like words that are heard and forgotten  
(Enriching the days and the years).  
The earth is my vassal to serve me,  
The flesh is my servant to feed,  
And the nations I hold in a thralldom  
For my wishes or need.



## YOUTH AND AGE

### *Youth*

I am tense with the glory of living,  
Filled with forces of life as they are;  
My goal is the end of creation,  
And my guidance a star.  
I am trembling with numberless longings,  
I am eager for labors that lure,  
Though my mind seeks the world for a conquest  
My strength will endure.

### *Age*

I near the end of my journey —  
The end of the journey is pain.  
My goal is clay of the graveyard,  
My guide is a cane.

### *Youth*

I have gazed on the white beams of heaven  
And have laughed at the wonders of earth,  
For my friends are the stars in their courses,  
And the world is my mirth.  
And all things are tools for my using  
Or the ministers of my desire,  
For the earth and the air are my servants  
And the water and fire.

*Age*

Beyond the nebulae forming  
I have travelled in torment, my friend;  
I have gazed on the earth and its wonders,  
And have thought of the end.  
My eyes are hollow with seeing,  
My lips are silent with awe,  
For I cannot forget where I travelled —  
Nor tell what I saw.

*Youth*

To delve in the mysteries hidden,  
Unhindered by ages of awe,  
The truth to discover unbidden —  
Then to tell what I saw —  
This is part of the scope of my purpose  
That the nations may cringe at my name,  
And the rocks and the rivers and cities  
Quiver with fame.

*Age*

Our blasts that sound so boldly  
On the headland heights of fame  
Are as creaking of the crickets  
In the roar of a flame.  
Yea, the name for which you struggle,  
On the giddy wheel of time  
Is like dust before the whirlwind,  
Or a lost rime.

I know that no mortal endureth,  
Not the true nor the just nor the great;  
We are but the toys of the ages  
And the puppets of fate.

*Youth*

Nay! one thing can fate annul never,  
Nor can the ages destroy;  
One thing endureth forever  
Neither puppet nor toy.  
When the flare of the suns is in ashes  
And the thunder of planets above  
Is ended, one thing will be living,  
And that is love!

She has given that life to my spirit  
That a thousand deaths cannot slay,  
The rusting of years cannot wear it,  
Nor time take away;  
She has given the glory of living  
Since I knew that my breath is her breath,  
That I feel contempt for the ages  
And pity for death!

### *Age*

The words of youth are like torches  
That flare and at midnight decay,  
The thoughts of youth are like shadows  
That night takes away.  
The bolts that you thundered so surely  
In your clamorous volley of breath  
Are like raindrops that strive with the ocean  
On the armor of death.

The passion of youth is nothing  
That death takes reckoning of,  
And fate is not stayed for a woman  
And all of her love.  
For me a friend is my choosing.  
In my respite while death still delays  
I seek out some lonely old comrade  
And talk of old days.

My glory of life is departed  
Like a shadow that night takes away,  
I shiver afraid of the highest,  
With fear in the way.  
My eyes are turned backward from seeing,  
My lips are silent with awe,  
For I dare not reflect on my journey,  
Nor see what I saw.

## YOUTH COMPARES HIMSELF WITH AGE

I am young and full of dreams —  
Dreams of honor, wisdom, doubt,  
Love wherein all gladness seems —  
What has age to dream about?

All my thoughts are things to come:  
Deeds all great and strange and new,  
Yearnings leading far from home —  
What strange things has age to do?

If she will be mine some day —  
Helen, Grace, or Rosalys —  
Greater sweet would no man pray —  
What red lips has age to kiss?

All my joys are yet to be;  
His can never be, he knows,  
Having been, He has to see  
Only what can death disclose.

## YOUTH'S A STUFF WILL NOT ENDURE

Kiss me tonight, dear, while we're young  
And the love-light shines through your happy  
tears;  
Ask no delays, for the knell's soon rung,  
And where shall we be in a hundred years?

Nobody will ask to kiss you then,  
Nobody will say that your smile endears;  
Millionaires, servant-maids, beggar-men  
Will walk on your grave in a hundred years.

I shall not ask to kiss you then.  
I shall be dead, and my mind that fears  
And my heart that longs will be nothing when  
The circuit is run of a hundred years.

Kiss me tonight, dear, while you can;  
Love me the more ere the dark day nears  
When the horror comes o'er the soul of a man.  
Where shall we be in a hundred years?

## LOVE'S ALTAR

The incense of Love's sacrifice is sweet  
When everyone doth bring his offering,  
And blushful lovers join in worshiping,  
Singing the songs through ancient usage meet.  
Who heeds the sound of toiling in the street,  
Or turns his steps to dusty wayfaring?  
Song upon song! It is a priceless thing  
To place a votive offering at Love's feet.

Ceaseless the gifts that pile Love's altar high —  
Richest of all the heart hath choices of;  
Yea, the sweet savor trailing lightly by  
Is ever-burning life-blood true enough,  
For charred and dead upon Love's altar lie  
Life's dearest things but one — and that  
one love.

## SNARES

Hair spun of spider-gold,  
Lips one would die to kiss,  
Will it be held amiss  
Should I be overbold?

Caught in the spider's thread  
Who holds the fly to blame?  
Should there to me be shame  
By spider-beauty led?

Eros hath smitten me  
By that heart-bow, thy mouth.  
Thirsty from Love's long drouth  
I seek my well in thee.



## A VISITOR

My life will be little without her,  
Without her my strength will decay,  
For the spirit of love is about her  
And that is my power and my stay;  
My purpose will fail and hope sicken  
When she is gone away.

The flower and the flower-leaf  
Will wither in the grass,  
The oat-sheaf and the barley-sheaf  
Will mold as the rains pass,  
And the golden-rod will come to grief  
With all the wealth it has.

She is pure as the air of the mountains  
To the traveller at rest,  
And cool as the spray of fountains  
When the heat is bitterest,  
Or as winds across the waters  
When the sun is in the west.

## TWO LOVERS

Her cheeks are the silvery pink that lies  
In shells, her eyes are heavenly blue,  
Her mouth is sweet with modesties,  
Her hair is sun and shadow too.

His deep-set eyes look straight before  
Half-dreamily, seeing future things,  
His limbs are strong with the strength of four,  
His head is royal, like a king's.

It is great bliss for them to sit  
And kiss beneath the maple trees,  
To feel each other's heart-beats flit  
Is sweet as life can be to these.

To speak one's highest thoughts with ease,  
To touch, to see one's worshiper,  
To kiss beneath the maple trees,  
Is ~~1~~very sweet to him and her.

## THE WIDOWER

He married her and then she died.

His flower was broken by the wind;  
The sweetest flower in the world wide  
Was crushed and left no seed behind.

Because he did so worship her  
And could not part with all his love,  
He laid her not where others were  
But buried her in his own grove.

Beneath the trees where they had talked  
And trembled at each other's kiss,  
Below the ground where she had walked  
He laid what love and joy were his.

As she had been his own in life  
He thought of her as his when dead.  
Though she was now a dumb, cold wife,  
Her house he often visited.

Once as he touched her grave he said,  
"Sweet, silent one, you do not hear  
While on this mound I lay my head  
And speak of all your goodness, dear.

I know that crushed on fate's quick wheel,  
Sweet, silent one, there is no you,  
But I would give even life to feel  
That what some people say is true:

That I shall meet you as you were  
With that strange sweetness that you had,  
Your hair that made my heart to stir,  
And your clean smile that made me  
glad.

Thinking how sweet she was to touch,  
How sweet to kiss and sit beside,  
His mind went wandering over-much  
And he forgot that she had died.

He tried to kiss her lips, to say  
In thought, some name he used to call,  
But something always barred the way —  
He seemed to strike against a wall.

He tried to gain some certain hold  
On this strange thing that barred him  
thus —  
He vaguely felt his cheek was cold  
And knew that there the trouble was.

That cold touch brought him back to life,  
And made him quake in heart and limb;  
He knew he had a grave to wife  
And many lights were dark to him.

## THE NEW AMERICA

Our country, bound with bands of steel  
From ocean shore to ocean shore,  
Thou art how glorious and how real —  
Like nothing earth has seen before.

In blood and battle thou wert born  
To stretch thy name across the earth;  
From heaven full many a star was torn  
In the dark evening of thy birth.

But many a storm is weathered now  
And many a foe is laid to rest —  
Green laurels deck thy still-green brow  
And life still surges in thy breast.

— Still young to make the world go round,  
To bear the thrusts and turns of fate;  
Still flushed to make the lands resound  
With life and zeal intemperate!

Without the lure of ancient days  
But greater than the dead past brings,  
You roll upon your giant ways  
Above the wrecks of dusty kings.

What were the ancient great that blazed  
In colored pomp that flamed like the sun  
To this where liberty hath raised  
A hundred nations into one?

How would their gods of battle class  
With thine? Thine iron ships would glide  
Through triremes as through broken glass,  
Thy guns would soil the phalanx' pride.

The treasures that the Great King lost  
At Susa and Persepolis  
Were baubles to the giant cost  
That makes one city what it is.

In ancient art and polities  
Let Pedant of the dome-like brow  
Declare a greater glory lies —  
No one believes such nonsense now.

For all the honored past has wrought  
In sculptured stone and lofty rime  
And lordly heritage of thought  
Is part of this, the present time.

We are the heirs of all the years;  
And thou, the latest land and last,  
A-throb with deeds and aims and fears,  
Art chiefest heir of all the past.

And now among the great of earth  
What nation dares thy fury feel,  
Or questions of thy greater worth,  
Or dares to test thy grip of steel?

Thy power is feared on shore and main,  
In every land, on every sea;  
Across the world and back again  
Is not enough for thine and thee.

But now no land fears thunderous guns  
Or fields of men or iron boats  
Of thine or any other one's —  
Thy power of wealth is at their throats.

For now no land would dare despise  
Thy food or men, or dare express  
A limit to thine enterprise;  
And seas have found thee limitless.

Where ghosts of bloody galleons ride  
And fearful shade imploreth shade,  
In peaceful power thy flag floats wide,  
Thy mighty steamships ply in trade.

Thus thou hast bound the world about  
With chains that wealth will weld complete,  
And time will bid thy power spread out  
To bring the nations to thy feet.

From greater heights to greater heights,  
The past and present to transcend,  
Thy glory leaps like leaping lights,  
And no one now can see the end.



## IOWA

No towering cities million-souled  
    Blacken the beauty of thy plain,  
Or bind thine heart with links of gold  
    Or curse of pleasure and of pain.

The sneer of wealth and vice and pride  
    That marks the vulgar millionaire,  
The foreign faces torture-tried  
    And fierce with hate are otherwise.

Across thy fields the sweet winds blow  
    And the red evening sunbeams shine;  
Thine is the joy of things that grow,  
    The pureness of the earth is thine.

The cattle in thine endless fields,  
    Thy good grain grown in sun and shower  
To the rich crop the harvest yields,  
    Are to the nations food and power.

Across the lands the steam cars go,  
    Across the seas the great ships glide  
To melting rock and solid snow,  
    And thou art safely stored inside.

To snatch the dying from the grave —  
The living corpses famine-gnawed —  
For this you haste o'er land and wave —  
No land too far, no sea too broad.

In alien lands the hungry strain  
With dying flesh against the death;  
The blessing of thy golden grain  
Is their strong shield that conquereth.

Let no man say thou hast not pride —  
Thou hast the pride that wisdom would:  
The schoolhouse on the valley-side  
And health and homes and brotherhood.

The honest pride in honest worth  
Is thine, not pride in wealth or ease —  
Is not the strength to till the earth  
And feed the world, better than these?

Give some the sick unrest that comes  
With homeless golden wretchedness,  
For thee a hundred thousand homes  
And wider hearts that love and bless.

## THE CITY

Here are the seats of the mighty  
Fashioned for men as they are —  
Thunder and smoke of the railroad,  
Roar of the overhead car,  
Streets overcrowded with faces,  
Clanging of hammer and steel,  
Stench of the street and the station,  
Whir of the automobile.

We have builded it higher than Babel,  
We have hollowed it under the earth,  
We have wrought it as mortal is able  
For the glory of man and his mirth.  
On the fruits of the earth he is feasted  
In the flare of the giant hotel,  
Through the flesh of the earth on the subway  
He is hurried unerringly well.

Built by the sweat of his labor,  
Wrought out of iron and fire,  
This is complete with whatever  
Man can devise or desire.  
Bought by his soul or his money  
Are pleasure and power and strife,  
Where vice is the partner of virtue  
And death is the comrade of life.

In the day the true sunlight is withered  
To a gray from the pureness of white,  
In the night this is wrapped in the garment  
Of a fiery pink haze of light.  
Like nothing that ever existed  
In far-away ages or place,  
We have fashioned this city of wonders  
For the glory and shame of the race.

## HEAVEN

Harps in heaven would not please,  
Throbbing all the new day long,  
Nor the strains of angel-song  
Chanting of the deity's

Wisdom, power and majesty;  
If I find my heaven, I,  
Passing all this grandeur by,  
Know what I will have it be:

Near a stream where water wells  
Over sunlit sand and stone,  
One girl walking all alone  
In a field of asphodels.

—Like a lily not of earth  
Growing at the gates of dawn  
Where a kinder sun has shone  
Since the glory of its birth.

—Like a lily tall and rare  
Swaying in a scented wind,  
Making all the earth seem kind.  
Making all the earth seem fair.

It will stop my heart to see  
How she stoops to pick the flowers,  
While the changeless heaven-hours  
Float away in ecstasy.

I shall kiss her cool red lips;  
Where the grass is warm and sweet  
I shall lay me at her feet  
While her trembling finger-tips

Trace sweet mazes in my hair,  
Wreath the flowers in her own.  
Heavy crown or bulky throne  
Will not mar our pleasure there.

To my sweetheart I shall say,  
“Let us think no more of those  
Who on earth were friends or foes —  
Here is duty gone away.”

To me will my sweetheart say,  
“In this field of shining flowers  
Let us taste the present hours —  
Here is memory gone away.”

To my sweetheart I shall say,  
“Here where lovely waters glide  
Through green pastures sanctified  
Circumstance has lost its way.”

To me will my sweetheart say,  
    "Think no more of time or change,  
    Let your heart in gladness range—  
Here has death been driven away,

Though as sweet as life can be,  
    On the earth our love was brief.  
    Here in rest and sweet relief  
We can love eternally."

## OUR CREATION

Beyond the whirl of the planets,  
In the outer dark,  
Where never a sun-ray enters  
Or a star-spark—  
There is no food for the senses  
In that far place,  
No matter, no motion, and therefore  
No time, no space.

Shot like an arrow onward  
Swifter than light,  
Thousands of light-years outward  
Into the night,  
Into the place of the silence,  
The cold and the dark,  
Would we could go past the sun-ray  
And the star-spark.

—Just you and I — two lovers —  
Beyond all space,  
When time is lost in the nothing  
Of that far place!  
There we should form a creation,  
Out of nothing the real;  
The failures of earth we should banish  
To create the ideal.



At the first the cold and the darkness  
And the shudder of night  
We should change to the flaming of colors  
And the glory of light.  
And we should make sound as of music,  
Now heard and now mute,  
And odors of flowers and of perfumes  
And taste of sweet fruit.

We should create an island  
In a gold sea  
Where the winds were scented of roses  
And the waves in glee  
Threw up their bright yellow waters  
On the golden sands,  
Where the sky and the trees and the colors  
Were the work of our hands.

And you would choose the day-tints  
And I the night,  
And each might be green or yellow  
Or red or white,  
And the night might be one of December  
And the day June's,  
And the light of the sun might be purple  
And green the moon's.

There where no foes could unbind us  
Or fate bid us part  
We should join all the wonder of nature  
With the pleasure of art.  
The years could not give us to sorrow,  
Nor death bid us die,  
Nor chance by an evil tomorrow  
Wring forth a cry.

Thus in our own creation  
Either shifting or still,  
Where space and time and sensation  
Were the works of our will,  
Beyond the realm of the sun-ray  
And the threat of the night  
We should live in a love everlasting  
And the freedom of might.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

This night of all each watcher pondereth  
On that fell gift that many New Years  
bring:

The grave — and thinks even as the chime-  
bells ring

Thousands of men are giving up the breath.

Thousands of men like you and me, he saith,

Dying tonight, and more at vanishing

Of night will die, at noon, at evening—

And thus each day till all of us meet death.

Yea, but the early light of morrow-morn

How many thousand new-born souls will  
see!

And all the destined days bear toward the  
goal

The mighty millions of the yet unborn,

The truer, stronger, better race to be,

For which the tireless ages roll and roll.

## SONG TO MAIA

*(From in Modern Times)*

Queen of the earth and of the year,  
Tender-eyed Maia, art thou here  
    To fill all men with breath of spring,  
To dry with sun the crocus' tear,  
    And stir the leaves with gladdening?

Thy breath is of anemonies  
And cool to nostrils quick to seize;  
    Thy dress like Dian's gold and green  
Is filled with ripples of the breeze  
    And scent of earth and evergreen.

The birds are happy thralls to you  
And sing thy praise the whole day through,  
    Admitting need and love of thee;  
The brown fields take thy color too  
    In token of their loyalty.

Through thee men lose their care and fear,  
Leave Winter's woe-debts in arrear,  
    And all take thee a youthful bride;  
Thou giv'st them strength to live the year  
    In joy of spring and summer-tide.

## SUMMER

The world is old but beauty dwells in it  
Just as in long-forgotten centuries,  
There is no change but that our little wit  
Wags of itself until our reverence sleeps.  
Still every morn the new-born wonder peeps,  
O'er the fresh hills or over sparkling seas  
Red with the death of deathless deities,  
Still the sweet summer winds upon their way  
Shake the bright leaves the whole long summer through,  
Still in the lap of Earth the lazy Day  
Lolls half-asleep and overtired to woo,  
Yet must he kiss her golden-shining hair  
And tell her through the years she still is fair,  
As ages gone has been his wont to do.

This afternoon it seemed the very sun  
Weary of turning rested half an hour,  
Yea, the lost hope of many a buried one  
I thought had come to summer—deathless  
dower,  
It seemed the middle of eternity  
And that no thing would ever come to end;  
Not a leaf shook on any tremulous tree,  
The shadows moved not on the slumbering grass,

Only one clear, sweet bell, time's constant  
friend,  
Throbb'd for the weary hours that would not  
pass.

Tonight the hornèd moon is gold ablaze  
With one gold star beside her in the skies;  
It is a night when all the wandering ways  
Of woodland are enchanted; in the leaves  
Pan is abroad, and by the bright fireflies  
The dryads dance as everyone believes  
Who sees the satyrs on the reedy plain  
And Daphne turn from wood to girl again,  
Or hears the wind-gods' whispered secrecies.

## THE FLUX OF THINGS

Whereto shall we cling, we weak mortals,  
For nature commands us to cling  
To something that stirs not nor crumbles  
Nor flees with mercurial wing;  
But all things are shifting, are shifting  
As the rain to the sun to the rain,  
And only the sureness of shifting  
Is sure to remain.

Strong rock that is shattered and sundered,  
Strong ship that is sunk in the seas,  
Strong building that lieth in ruin —  
What faith can we fasten to these?  
Strong joy that is slave unto sorrow,  
Strong life that is vassal to death,  
You are shifting and weak and uncertain  
As the dying's breath.

Strong soul that was born with a purpose,  
Let us see how you bear the world's swing,  
You are shifting as seasons are shifting  
From the spring to the winter to spring.  
The sun giveth place unto darkness,  
Nor knoweth a purpose or goal,  
And changes give place unto changes  
In the shifting soul.

## THE POET

The lone heights of Parnassus mount  
Are mine, and mine the bowers of love,  
An mine is the Castalian fount  
With all the fame and power thereof.

For some are fierce in battle-strife,  
And some are warm in virtue curled,  
And some are great in righteous life—  
But it is mine to rule the world!

For who can stir the hearts of men,  
And who can shake the seats of bliss,  
Has gained the great dominion—  
The lordship of the world is his.

My song can boom of battle-rage  
And whirl the weapons of the brave  
A sun-baked conquest-pilgrimage  
O'er treacherous land and alien wave.

Or soft as breeze in summer trees  
Of sighing love my verses sing,  
And I can make with tricks as these  
A million lovers clasp and cling.



'Tis mine to sing of desperate kiss  
And throbbing breast and passionate sighs  
And all the sweet devotedness  
Of wistful lips and thoughtful eyes.

None can escape my reaching rule—  
The dead man's friend disconsolate,  
The school-boy in the grammar-school,  
The emperor in his palace-gate.

None can escape my pinionings —  
The husband when the birth-time nears,  
The wife that at the cradle sings,  
The babe that in the cradle hears.

The blacksmith with his white-hot bands  
Is mine in singing at the forge,  
With sighs and songs in conquered lands  
I rule the victims and the scourge.

The old man dying faintly leans  
To hear a song remembered  
Of youth and all that youth-time means.  
None can escape me—save the dead.









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